

SEPTEMBER 7, 1978

NOTE TO EDITORS: TOLSTOY'S BIRTHDATE IS SEPT. 9
TOLSTOY-YEAR IN AMERICA

ANNCR:

THIS YEAR PUBLISHERS, UNIVERSITIES AND READERS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES ARE CELEBRATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF ONE OF THE GREATEST WRITERS OF ALL TIME, LEO TOLSTOY.REPORTS: VOICE:

IN THE UNITED STATES FEW FOREIGN WRITERS CAN RIVAL IN POPULARITY THE RUSSIAN LEO TOLSTOY. SEVERAL YEARS AGO A REPORTER TOOK A POLL OF ONE-THOUSAND AMERICANS: ASKING WHICH BOOKS THEY WOULD TAKE WITH THEM IF THEY HAD TO SPEND THE REST OF THEIR LIVES ON A DESERT ISLAND? AFTER THE BIBLE AND THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, MOST PEOPLE CHOSE TOLSTOY'S WAR AND PEACE. HOLLYWOOD FILM-MAKERS HAVE MADE SEVERAL FILMS BASED ON HIS ANNA KARENINA. ONE OF THESE VERSIONS, WITH GRETA GARBO, WAS SHOWN AGAIN THIS YEAR ON AMERICAN TELEVISION AS WELL AS A RECENT ENGLISH VERSION, MADE AS A TELEVISION SERIAL.

PUBLISHERS CELEBRATED THE ANNIVERSARY YEAR WITH THREE NEW BOOKS, INCLUDING, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ENGLISH, THE LETTERS OF TOLSTOY IN TWO VOLUMES, AND THE MEMOIRS OF HIS DAUGHTER TATYANA. THE THIRD IS A BOOK OF ESSAYS ENTITLED TOLSTOY'S MAJOR FICTION, BY A WELL KNOWN AMERICAN CRITIC, EDWARD WASIOLEK.

SCHOLARS RECALL THE CLOSE CONTACTS TOLSTOY MAINTAINED WITH AMERICANS. AMONG POLITICIANS, PRESIDENT LINCOLN WAS CLOSEST TO HIS HEART. ONCE HE WROTE: "OF ALL THE GREAT NATIONAL HEROES AND STATESMEN OF HISTORY, LINCOLN IS THE ONLY REAL GIANT. HE WAS WHAT BEETHOVEN WAS IN MUSIC, DANTE IN POETRY

AND CHRIST IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE." TOLSTOY CORRESPONDED WITH AMERICAN CIVIL-RIGHTS ACTIVISTS, AND RECEIVED MANY AMERICAN JOURNALISTS ON HIS ESTATE, YASNAYA POLYANA. HE MET AMERICAN GEORGE KENNAN WHOM THE CZARIST POLICE PERMITTED TO STUDY LIFE IN THE FORCED LABOR CAMPS IN SIBERIA AND WHO LATER WROTE A BOOK ENTITLED SIBERIA AND THE EXILE SYSTEM. TOLSTOY ONCE ALSO RECEIVED WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN, WHO WAS THREE-TIME DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT AND WHO LATER BECAME PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON'S SECRETARY OF STATE. TOLSTOY HAD THE FIRST DICTAPHONE IN RUSSIA, SENT TO HIM AS A XMAS PRESENT BY THE INVENTOR HIMSELF, THOMAS EDISON.

TOLSTOY WAS ONE OF THE BEST INFORMED MEN OF HIS TIME. HE READ NOT ONLY THE WEST EUROPEAN PRESS, BUT ALSO THE LEADING AMERICAN DAILIES AND MAGAZINES. AND LIKE HIS CONTEMPORARY, KARL MARX, HE ALSO OFTEN PUBLISHED IN AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS. WHEN THE CZAR ISSUED A MANIFESTO FOR WORLD DISARMEMENT, TOLSTOY, WAS SKEPTICAL, BELIEVING THAT THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT COULD NOT DISARM BECAUSE IT NEEDED ARMS TO OPPRESS ITS OWN PEOPLES. IN A LETTER PUBLISHED IN THE NEW YORK WORLD HE WROTE: "THE RESULT OF THIS MANIFESTO WILL BE WORDS. UNIVERSAL PEACE WILL BE ACHIEVED ONLY BY THE REFUSAL TO OBEY A GOVERNMENT WHICH REQUIRES TAXES AND MILITARY SERVICE FOR THE PURPOSE OF ORGANIZED VIOLENCE."

IN ANOTHER LETTER, TOLSTOY WARNED THE CZAR THAT IF HE DID NOT GRANT FREEDOM TO THE PEOPLES OF RUSSIA, THERE WOULD BE A TRAGEDY, A FRACTICIDAL SPILLING OF BLOOD. TOLSTOY ADDED IN HIS LETTER:" AUTOCRACY IS AN OUTMODED FORM OF GOVERNMENT. THEREFORE IT IS ONLY POSSIBLE TO SUPPORT SUCH A FORM OF GOVERNMENT BY MEANS OF VIOLENCE, INCREASED POLICING, DEPORTATIONS,

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTIONS, THE BANNING OF BOOKS, NEWSPAPERS AND THE DISTORTION OF EDUCATION. ONE CAN OPPRESS PEOPLES BY MEASURES OF VIOLENCE BUT NOT GOVERN THEM."

AS A WRITER AND AS AN HISTORICAL FIGURE, TOLSTOY HAS FASCINATED THE AMERICAN PUBLIC EVER SINCE HIS FIRST BOOK APPEARED IN ENGLISH. ON THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH, A NEW YORK CRITIC COMPARED TOLSTOY TO A VOLCANO, A RAIN OF LAVA, WHICH NOT ONLY FERTILIZED THE AMERICAN SOIL, BUT ALSO ALL THAT OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION.

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